

Thus, the method of claim 1 is clearly distinguished over the disclosures of *Pitchenik*, *Cordery et al* and *Amirpahani* when taken alone or in combination. Claim 2, which requires the substitute indicium be a modification of the first indicium, also clearly defines over the references. Claims 3 - 5 contain additional limitations not suggested by the references. The remaining dependent claims are deemed allowable for the additional limitations they recite, in combination with subject matter each inherits from its parent claim(s).

We respectfully submit that the application as now presented is in condition for allowance.



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Charles W. Fallow  
Reg. No. 28,946

Shoemaker and Mattare, Ltd.  
2001 Jefferson Davis Highway  
Arlington, VA 22202

(703) 415-0810

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1. (amended) A method of mail preparation including the steps of:

a1 processing a first mail item comprising a mail item in a series of mail items;  
effecting an accounting operation in respect of a first postage charge for said first mail item;

generating a first postage indicium to provide evidence that said accounting operation has been effected in respect of said first postage charge;

processing a second mail item comprising a mail item subsequent to said first mail item in said series of mail items;

determining if said first postage remains unused because processing of said first mail item has not been completed; and, if said first postage is unused:

determining if said first postage indicium is suitable for use in relation to said second mail item, and, if said first postage indicium is suitable for use in relation to said second mail item, generating a substitute postage indicium to provide evidence in relation to said second mail item that said accounting operation has been effected in respect of said first postage charge, and

if the first postage indicium is not suitable for use in relation to said second mail item, effecting an accounting operation in respect of a second postage charge for said second mail item; and generating a second postage indicium to provide evidence that said accounting operation has been effected in respect of said second postage charge.

VERSION WITH MARKING SHOWING CHANGES MADE

1. A method of mail preparation including the steps of: [-]

processing a first mail item comprising a mail item in a series of mail items;  
effecting an accounting operation in respect of a first postage charge for said first mail item;

generating a first postage indicium to provide evidence that said accounting operation has been effected in respect of said first postage charge;

processing a second mail item comprising a mail item subsequent to said first mail item in said series of mail items;

determining if said first postage [charge ]remains unused because processing of said first mail item has not been completed; and, if said first postage is unused[ ]:

determining if said first postage indicium is suitable for use in relation to said second mail item[;], and,

if said first postage indicium is suitable for use in relation to said second mail item, generating a substitute postage indicium to provide evidence in relation to said second mail item that said accounting operation has been effected in respect of said first postage charge, and

if the first postage indicium is not suitable for use in relation to said second mail item, effecting an accounting operation in respect of a second postage charge for said second mail item; and generating a second postage indicium to provide evidence that said accounting operation has been effected in respect of said second postage charge.